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Demographic and social statistics:
Siena Group for Social Statistics

Report of the Siena Group for Social Statistics

Note by the Secretary-General

1. The Secretary-General has the honour to transmit to the Statistical Commission the report of the Siena Group for Social Statistics (Secretariat: Netherlands), which is contained in the annex. The report is transmitted to the Commission in accordance with a request of the Statistical Commission at its thirty-first session.[1]

Points for discussion

2. The Statistical Commission may wish to:

(a) Discuss whether the mandate of the Siena Group is focused and its objectives are clear and attainable;

(b) Comment on the Siena Group's proposals for future work.

* E/CN.3/2001/1.

[1] *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 2000, Supplement No. 4* (E/2000/24), para. 1.

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Annex

Report of the Siena Group for Social Statistics

Purpose

To promote and coordinate international cooperation in the areas of social statistics by focusing on social indicators, social accounting, concepts and classifications, and an analysis of the linkages and frameworks for integrating social, economic and demographic data for the purposes of policy formulation and analysis.

Year organized

1993

Participants

Australia, Austria, Canada, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Korea, Mexico, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Portugal, Singapore, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America, Economic Commission for Europe, Statistical Office of the European Communities (Eurostat), Economic Commission for the Latin American Countries (ECLAC), United Nations Statistics Division, United Nations Development Group, Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development.

Meetings and other events

1. Siena, October 1993
2. Stockholm, June 1994
3. Oslo, June 1995
4. Paris, June 1996
5. Neuchâtel, Switzerland, June 1997
6. Sydney, December 1998
7. Maastricht, the Netherlands, 22-24 May 2000

The International Summer School on Social Statistics is organized by the Training Institute for European Statisticians and the Siena Group for Social Statistics, in cooperation with the University of Siena Group and sponsored by the European Commission (Eurostat). The Summer School programme is developed around three courses/three themes to be arranged over three consecutive years. The first theme was "Inequality and equity" (5-11 July 1998). The second theme (1999) will be: "Participation, discrimination and exclusion" (approached mainly from the meso level). The third (2000) summer school, held during the week of 28 May 2000 in Siena, had the theme "Cohesion, integration and policy analysis" (approached mainly from the macro level).

Topics considered

1. National accounts, economic analysis and social statistics.
2. Social reporting and social accounting.
3. Monitoring social exclusion in education and labour markets.
4. Intergenerational relations and social mobility.
5. On the way to a multicultural society.
6. Families at the end of the twentieth century.
7. Accounting in social statistics and indicators for social development.

Products

Volumes of proceedings are prepared for each meeting, containing all the papers presented and summaries of the discussions. The proceedings of the 2000 version will be released soon.

In addition, the Siena Group has issued three thematic publications:

Families at the End of the Twentieth Century (1999), available from the Australian Bureau of Statistics. Send requests to:

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Social Statistics Branch
Tel: +61 2 6252 7068
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Monitoring Multicultural Societies: A Siena Group Report, available from:

Swiss Federal Statistical Office
Schwarztorstrasse 96, CH 3003 Bern,
Phone +41 (0)31 322 87 87
Fax +41 (0)31 322 78 57
E-mail contact: paul.roethlisberger@bfs.admin.ch

A Statistical Portrait of Youth Exclusion (1997), available from:

ISTAT, Centro Diffusione
Fax: +3-06-4673-4177
E-mail: dipdiff@istat.it

Theme of the 2000 meeting: "Accounting in social statistics and indicators for social development"

The ongoing transformation of social statistics from a wide variety of isolated statistics into integrated systems (comprehensive surveys, social accounting matrices etc.) is considered to be the logical consequence of the increased need on the part of modern policy makers to monitor social and economic developments via a restricted set of authoritative indicators based on a consistent framework of statistical information via internationally comparable statistical information (indicators) and harmonization efforts. Indicators and integration were discussed in earlier Siena Group meetings as well as in the context of the Mondorf seminars. The experience with building statistical systems and developing and using indicators is not yet equally widespread. A variety of international organizations have developed sets of social (key) indicators and formulated requirements for basic statistical information. In anticipation of these policy demands, some national statistical institutes have experimented with integrating surveys, others have put much effort into building accounting systems and others have investigated the possibilities of existing and new registers and other administrative sources. To consolidate the achieved progress and to stimulate further developments, the meeting in Maastricht intended to provide a forum to integrate and share existing experience, find new approaches and develop common strategies. The meeting was divided into five sessions, on the following topics:

1. State of the art and its relevance to the policy agenda.

2. Why and for whom are indicators produced.

3. How do we decide what to measure.

4. How data is collected and what provisions are made for consistency and comparability.

5. The linking of monetary and non-monetary phenomena making up social accounting systems.

The conclusions of the meeting stress the need for more structured studying and cooperation in the field of indicators and in the field of methodologies for combining data from different sources. For this purpose, subgroups have been proposed to develop cooperation projects in these fields between participants from different countries. The Siena Group also stresses its role in training in social statistics via the summer school activities.

Forthcoming meeting

The next meeting of the Siena Group will be organized by the Portuguese National Statistical Office and held (tentatively) in summer 2001.

Point of contact

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The Siena Group also maintains an Internet site within the English language section of the ISTAT site: *http://www.istat.it/Primpag/siena2.htm*.